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CITY OF JOLIET, UNION STATION
I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor
500 East Jefferson Street
Joliet
Will County
Illinois

HAER No. IL-63

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 37127
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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

CITY OF JOLIET, UNION STATION
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Location: I & M Canal National Heritage Corridor
50 East Jefferson Street
Joliet, Will County, Illinois

UTM: 16 E. 409920 N. 4597350
Quad: Joliet

Date of Construction: 1912

Architect: Jarvis Hunt

Builder: Adam Groth Company

Present Owner: City of Joliet and METRA
(Metropolitan Rail)

Present Use: Railroad Station

Significance: This impressive Beaux-Arts railroad station was designed by the architect Jarvis Hunt in 1912; at its peak, the station accommodated one hundred trains daily.

Project Information: The Illinois and Michigan Canal was designated a National Heritage Corridor in 1984. The following year HABS/HAER embarked on an extensive inventory and documentation project of the 100 mile-long corridor. Field work for this project was concluded in 1988. Final editing of the documentation was completed in 1992.

Historian: Carolyn Brown, 1986

Joliet's Union Station was designed by Jarvis Hunt and constructed between 1908 and 1912. The Adam Groth Company, a Joliet firm, was the contractor. Jarvis Hunt was the nephew of Richard Hunt, one of the first American architects to be trained at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, France. In designing Union Station, Jarvis Hunt followed the prevailing Beaux-Arts design principles. He emphasized classical motifs employed a symmetrical plan. The result was that Joliet's station was similar in style to many stations constructed in larger cities throughout the country. Hunt's work included Kansas City Union Station, the Rector Building, American Trust and Savings Bank in Chicago, Newark Museum, Arbor Lodge in Nebraska City, Gordon Hall in Cleveland, and Chicago's Lake Shore Athletic Club.

Flanked by two wings, the central section of Joliet's three-story Union Station measures 80' x 60'; the overall length, including the wings, is 240'. The building is constructed with a steel frame and reinforced concrete floors. The exterior is faced with Bedford limestone. A broad elevated walkway extends across the eastern facade of the building at the second-story level. The second floor houses an open concourse area; the main entrance at the lower level opens to a ticket area at left and a parcel post station at right. In the center, the main staircase leads to the upper-level concourse. The wings of the building at the second-floor level originally housed men's and ladies' lounges; offices and locker rooms were located in the wings at the lower level. The interior of this building is finished in polished Tennessee marble; the lighting fixtures in the main lobby and waiting room are bronze. The ticket desk is made of a single slab of Belgian marble, 57' long, 38" wide, and 5" thick.

Construction of Joliet's Union station was part of a municipal project to improve rail transportation systems through track elevation and a new station. Union Station replaced four separate stations operated by various rail companies in Joliet, including the Rock Island, the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad, the Chicago & Alton Railroad, the Michigan Central Railroad and the two belt lines- the Eastern, Joliet & Elgin and the Chicago, Milwaukee & Gary.

When completed in 1912, passenger traffic at Union Station reached a peak of 100 trains daily. Numerous streetcars and two interurban lines (the Chicago & Joliet Electric Railroad Co. and the Illinois Traction Co.) also served the city. Presently, the station is served by only two lines, Amtrak and a Chicago commuter line. Passenger traffic has declined to only a dozen trains each day.

SOURCES:

Lester F. Filson, "From Whence Came a City: The Story of Joliet and Will County, Illinois", unpublished ms, 1957, available in the Joliet Public Library.

Robert E. Sterling, Pictorial History of Will County, v. 1 (Joliet, IL: Will County Historical Publications Company, 1975).

Carl K. Klimek and Associates, Architects and Planners, Joliet Union Station Restoration and Adaptive Reuse Study, October 1981.

Interview with Dennis Kolodziej, METRA ticket agent, July 1986.